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WAR LETTERS

Capt. Joseph E. Fiske

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WAR LETTERS

of Capt. Joseph E. Fiske

[Harvard, '61]

Written to his parents during the War of the
Rebellion from Andover Theological
Seminary and Encampments in
North Carolina and from
Southern Prisons

The Maugus Press
Wellesley

A Literis Laeti Pro Patria Ad Arma

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By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow—but,
first I note
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim outline,
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,
The shrubs and trees; as I lift my eyes they seem to be stealthily
watching me,
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous
thoughts,
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, of those that
are far away;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

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From the report of the Class of 1861, Harvard College.

Joseph Emery Fiske—Sept. '61—July '62, in Andover Theological Seminary. Enlisted as Private, August, '62 was made Orderly Sergeant October 7. Regiment ordered to North Carolina and for some months stationed at Beaufort. He was made 1st Sergeant December 1st and acted as Post Adjutant from Dec. 3, '62 to March 3, '63. May 29, '63, he was commissioned 2d Lieut. 2d Mass. Heavy Artillery, and soon ordered to Boston on recruiting service, where he spent the next six months; receiving promotions—to 1st Lieut., August 1, and Captain, October 9, '63. In December '63 he was ordered to Norfolk, Virginia, and there placed in command of Fort O'Rourke, from December 19, '63 to February 13, '64. In February, he was transferred to Fort Gray, one and a half miles from Plymouth, N. C., built to protect the town from the ram Albemarle. He was in command here until April 19, the date of the surrender. After General Wessel surrendered the town Capt. Fiske, having repulsed several assaults was compelled to yield. He was taken as a prisoner through Tarboro, Goldsboro, Wilmington, Savannah and Macon to Andersonville; thence back to Macon, where he was kept in a stockade prison from May 1 to July 29, '64; when he was transferred to Savannah. On September 13, he was removed to Charleston, and kept there under the fire of his friends till October 6. Then he was taken to Columbia, S. C. When the approach of Sherman made it necessary to remove the prisoners from that place, he concealed himself with a few others and thus escaped, February 14, '65. Reporting for duty to Gen. Sherman, he was assigned to Gen. F. P. Blair's staff and remained with him a month until the army reached Fayetteville, N. C., when, receiving leave of absence, he took steamer for Wilmington and home. He was honorably discharged under general order 82, May 15, '65. In September he returned to Andover Theological Seminary.

Andover, February 20, 1861.

My dear Parents,—If I felt quite jolly and excited about the war news a week ago, how do you think I feel now? But good news is getting to be an old story. My faith, which has been derided by many, is now no stronger than it was six months ago because it can be no stronger. I believe that we are destined to become the greatest nation in the World. This topic is uppermost in the minds of almost all others here and elsewhere as well as myself. I cannot see why we should not expect a series of glorious victories from the Mississippi to the Potomac and down the seaboard to the Mexican line.

Andover, October 12, 1861.

.....You will notice that business is reviving as I repeatedly said it would some months ago and unless we meet with a calamitous defeat it will grow better and better and trade will be more brisk than it would have been had there been no war. We shall whip the rebels out and out before spring.....

Andover, October 20, 1861.

My dear Parents,—I have nothing to communicate. I arrived here safely after a tedious day in Boston, somewhat disheartened by the news of the battle of Ball's Bluff. I since have heard that one of my Cambridge classmates, O. W. Holmes, Jr., was wounded.... and, tho' reported *slightly* I fear that from the nature of the wound it will prove fatal. Our German professor Schmitt was *badly* wounded, I should judge fa-

tally. I saw him a short time before he went away. J. J. Lowell, the first Lieutenant of our drill club and a graduate of '58 was also wounded badly.....

Andover, November 5, 1861.

.....The place for every young man now is in the service of his country. The Harvard boys in the last engagement behaved nobly. Three more of our class have enlisted the past week.....

Andover, November 14, 1861.

.....We have just heard from the great Naval expedition and the big victory in Kentucky and everybody is very jolly over it.....

Andover, December 5, 1861.

....We are getting up a big army and navy, so big I fear we shall begin to fight among ourselves.....since reading Cameron's report I have cooled down very much. I had supposed that it was almost impossible to get men but it seems we have more than is wanted....

Andover, January 3, 1862.

....I think we may look for very decisive news from the "Army of the Potomac" very soon. A friend writes from Hooker's division that they are now ready to cross the river and move on the enemy's works. I think we are bound to have a united country once more.....

Andover, January 2, 1862.

....Everybody here is of course very much excited on account of the prospect of a war with England in spite of what we have yielded to appease her.....

Andover, February 14, 1862.

....I am quite well physically but very much excited about the war. We are having such splendid news that I can scarcely sleep for thinking of it. I pray that

the success may continue until rebellion is crushed.....
I want very much to hear particulars concerning the
fight at Roanoke Island as I have several friends in the
expedition among others E. L. Gould.....I do not
think many are killed on our side. Our reception in
Southern Tennessee and Northern Alabama is another
splendid sign of the times.....

Andover, March 7, 1862.

....I am very much surprised at Lincoln's proclama-
tion. If it is practical I hope it will be carried out but
I fear it will only tend to divide and distract the North
.....The war expenses of Andover the past year have
been \$110,000, a large sum for one town.....

Andover, May 16, 1862.

My dear Father and Mother,—How very quickly
the time of writing home has come again. "The days
are passing quickly by" but I do not regret them as
thus far they have only hurried me from pleasure to
pleasure. I am extremely well. In fact I do not well
understand how one could be other than well or happy
in this place, the atmosphere is so buoyant and the whole
aspect of nature so exquisitely beautiful that I cannot
see how one could think of his own poor body.....I
never knew spring so lovely except at ever dear old
Harvard.....We have splendid war news....tho' I
feel quite uneasy and shall until we defeat their two
main armies. The rebels certainly handle their troops
with great skill and efficiency.....Please remember
me to all my friends and believe me your loving son,
J. Emery Fiske.

Andover, June 6, 1862.

....We are beginning to see through the rebellion
now and this devastating war must soon be stopped...

Andover, July 15, 1862,

....I spent Sunday in Haverhill...and heard Mr. Nason preach.....a very stirring war sermon. A fellow who has been my most intimate friend leaves to-day for the war as a matter of duty and it begins to look to me as tho' I ought to go and do my country what service I can. I wanted to go at first for the fine excitement and honor of going but now I see nothing to tempt me to go but love of country and liberty. I know that the hardships of this war particularly are terrible but if you are willing to have me go and will so express yourselves, I will immediately enlist. I think I should be of more service as an officer and should strive to get a commission but should I fail would go as a private. If you do not believe it would be right for me to go, if you would suffer more by having me away than the service which I could render to my country would warrant, I will not go. But I believe a young man who is not now ready to lay down his life in his country's service and his God's is not worthy to live. The tender care you have always bestowed upon me and the anxious solicitude with which you have watched my every footstep demand of me that I should leave this matter entirely with you. I leave the matter with you, but I solemnly affirm I had rather die today or linger out my life in a noisome rebel prison than that our country should be destroyed and I have raised no hand to her help.....If you think it right and my duty to go to war, I wish you would let me know at once so that I may proceed to work immediately. I do not write under excitement. People here who are friendly tell me I misjudge my duty in the matter. Judge for me and I will abide by your judgment.....

Andover, July 21, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I received a letter from home the other day, (I came very near coming home Friday

morning) and was sorry to learn that I was destined to stay at a distance from the field of war, not because it is not pleasant to escape the dangers and hardships of war,—I should expect to lose my life or health if I went,—but because it seems mean for me to avoid the work which has got to be done by some one. If men are to be drafted as I think they will be if 300,000 are to be raised, I am not anxious to go. The whole matter I will let rest until I come home which will be in a little less than three weeks.....

Andover, July 25, 1862.

.... We have drills every night. A day or two since, the Professors by our own request addressed us on our duty in the present crisis. As a general rule they say we ought not now to go and give as their reasons that a time may come when we may be needed much more, that we cannot well endure the hardships of camp, that we are needed more at home and as recruiting is going on very well I think most of us will remain tho' nearly all wish to go when and in the way they can be of most service to their country. Meanwhile I feel quite deserted. Campbell who has been one of my most intimate friends has gone to New York to raise a company and my chum Emerson has enlisted at Chelsea as a *private*. It seems to me a rather rash thing to do although I didn't think it would have been so in me before he enlisted. He will have a terribly hard life; at least, Capt. Sawyer, who lost his leg in the battle of Newbern and has been visiting us, says so.

I am very glad indeed to hear that Needham promises so well. We are doing very well here.....

Andover, August 1, 1862.

.... I am very glad to see that Needham is sending recruits so rapidly and that Newton has filled its quota. I fear there will be need enough for all the men that can be raised before long. I suppose drafting will be re-

sorted to very soon now. I wish they had drafted when the new call was first issued. My chum is going directly to the seat of war. I didn't expect it of him. I am quite anxious to hear who have gone from Needham. I have heard from Jim Rice; he is at home wounded. He wrote for me to come down and see him and I shall do so as soon as I get home.

Andover, August 5, 1862.

....I shall be home Thursday night or Friday. I shall want some advice on enlisting. Another of my most intimate friends left here yesterday to volunteer and another who was intending to join our class next year who was a classmate at Cambridge has gone. ...

At Camp in Readville, October 4, 1862.

....I, unexpectedly to myself, did not return to Grantville last Monday. We went to Boston Tuesday as a regiment and had a very jolly time indeed. I shall come home on a furlough as soon as I can get one. I shall have it for three days and in it go to Andover and bid my friends goodbye wherever I can reach them. I am in the best of health and spirits and am enjoying myself. I went up to Dedham last night and had a supper and a good one, too.

We have a pleasant squad. There are twenty-one men from Needham in the regiment I am in.....

Readville, October 22, 1862.

....I have been very busy indeed. Every moment of my time is taken up and I am afraid all my letters will be very short indeed. Friday I was on guard, Saturday I was orderly, Sunday I was in command of the company and I tell you I had a busy time. I shall probably leave as orderly and have a good deal of labor and responsibility on my hands. I have been and am perfectly well and most of the time in good spirits. I find I am not disliked by the boys in the company nor by

my superior officers. There have been a great many people here to see me and I enjoy their coming very much indeed. I shall not be home until a week from next Saturday when I shall make a three days' visit and suppose it will be my last visit home at least for eight months. We get our muskets today. .

Headquarters Camp Massachusetts, October 26, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I have some leisure time in which to write today, a privilege which I have not had for a long time. I am as you will have heard before this reaches you, at Brig. Gen. Pierce's headquarters for the time being acting as orderly, that is, a sort of clerk. It is a more desirable place than at the camp for it is more civilized. I have a roof to shelter me, a bed to sleep in, a table to write at and a pass to carry me where I wish to go. I am all alone, having a room by myself which is quite a luxury, I can tell you. It seems rather lonesome, though, as the Brigadier is away this afternoon and so I have nothing to do. I am very well and do not expect to be sick during the campaign. Unless we go away before next Saturday I shall come home and spend the Sabbath. If we do go away before that I shall come home during the week. There is but little prospect of our getting away within two or three weeks. I have, I believe, the favor of all my superior officers and the esteem of the men under my charge. . . .

*Third Hold, Steamer Merrimac, Boston Harbor,
Date unknown.*

Day of the week said to be Friday.

My dear Parents,—The date I have given you gives about all the news I can write. We are lying off Ft. Independence quietly and enjoying ourselves remarkably under the circumstances. Do not be worried about me but think of me always as happy. I sleep fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. We hope to leave for the South today. Please write to me at New-

berne and send me papers. Direct to 43 Reg. Co. C. Newberne. All our Needham boys are well. I'll write at length when I can but we have no conveniences here.

*On Transport off No. Carolina coast,
November 13, 1862.*

My dear Parents,—I wonder if after all the exciting rumors you have heard about the regiments in the transports in the harbor you are not anxious about me? We have had a hard time and I am not inclined to deny it. But yet we are alive and have, I think, received no permanent injury from our fare. I was only uncomfortable in the harbor, not sick. Yesterday I was quite seasick and am weak today (Nov. 13) but have no doubt that the sickness will be of benefit when I reach land. The recital of our hardships would not please you and perhaps I had better leave them unwritten.

We have now been on board ship over a week and are off the North Carolina coast and we expect to reach Beaufort, N. C., sometime tomorrow or day after. Our passage thus far has been very pleasant but equally slow for we have been obliged to move slowly to allow the gunboat which is conveying us to keep up with us. We have also taken an unusual course to avoid the Alabama. We haven't anything fit to eat on board nor to drink neither, but I suppose it is just as well for we are all healthy and in quite good spirits.

Do not think for a moment that I regret having enlisted for I do not. We have had a hard experience and shall undoubtedly have still more. We have just hauled up to assist a vessel in distress and the gunboat is going to see what's the matter and all is excitement on board the steamer.

Besides the three or four vessels all is a waste of waters. The waters are almost as quiet to-day as a mill pond.

I have got acquainted with Mr. Manning and enjoy his society very much. When we were very hungry he gave me some sandwiches which I shared with the men and felt extremely grateful to him for. Our Quarter Master shot himself accidentally the other day through the foot and injured himself quite seriously.

I will add something before I send this; until then, goodbye.

We are just about to land. I'm well and jolly. Goodbye.

Newberne, November, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I take the first opportunity to write to you, informing you that I am in barracks near the small and somewhat illustrious city of Newberne. We did have a hard passage down here and no mistake. We were badly off in the harbor and had hard living and a good many were seasick but we are all well and myself especially. We are in very comfortable barracks and our rations will soon be served out regularly. I have been Acting Orderly since we started from Boston and enjoy the extra work very much. I hope to continue in the place. The country about here is the most desolate country I ever saw. Cape Cod is a paradise compared to it. All is sand and swamp. The woods are filled with dead trees which give a most melancholy look to the whole face of the country. And yet the land is very productive. I have already partaken of the fruits of the land in the shape of sweet potatoes, cheese, &c. and we have only been here twelve hours. Rest assured of one thing, that as long as we stay here I shall be not only contented but even happy. I have a room all to myself, something, as you know, which I shall prize very much indeed.....

Near Newberne, November 18, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I believe I promised to give you an idea of our journey here and the place itself. After I left you on the Common we marched to the wharf

and stayed there about two hours when we went on board the vessel down two flights into a dark and dismal hole where we stayed all the time we were on board; ten days in all. Our provisions were salt meat boiled in salt water and hard bread twice in the twenty-four hours. I had the right most of the time to go into the cabin, otherwise I should have had no place to sit down and when it rained and blew none to stand in. It was pretty rough. Well, finally, the welcome sight of land was seen and Beaufort was seen in the distance. We were sailing in in splendid style ahead of the others when a shock told us that the vessel had run aground. The engines worked, the sailors worked at the capstan but it was no use, there we lay for twenty-four hours more when we were taken off by a tug and lighter and packed into some freight cars as they stow away pigs and sheep, only the doors were open. We passed through the most forsaken looking country I ever saw, not worth fighting for, and after we stopped we marched through sand and mud and finally turned into some unfinished barracks where we stayed two days and then moved into tents where we now are. How long we shall remain is uncertain. The country is very barren, but for all that the camping ground is in a beautiful spot. It is on the bank of the Neuse, a most beautiful sheet of water. On the other side of the river is a very beautiful forest. A little way down the river is a bridge with pickets stationed on it, two cannon commanding it, and boats with loads of lumber floating round lazily. The fields about here are consecrated by battles and reminiscences, bullets lying round in profusion, remains of rebel encampment. This morning I went out to get some boards and visited a deserted house. It was a two-story brick house with all the windows out, the floors ripped up. The owner was said to be the possessor of a very large plantation. There were the remains of a Cotton Gin, a Grave Yard with the tomb of an old North Carolina Governor broken open, (with his skull stuck on a pole) and various other things of interest.

I went to Newberne yesterday. It is not much like a New England town. It is all low. A few white people are round the streets beside the soldiers. Almost all the business is Uncle Sam's. The prices are very high. We got quite a good dinner of oysters, beefsteak, eggs, good bread and butter, &c. Our living in camp is poor at the best. We hope for an improvement soon. We do not know how soon we may be sent into active service, or where. We are ready for anything that comes along. Do not worry about me, for there is no reason. I am well and enjoying myself. Write to me when you can and send me papers.

Beaufort, November 23, 1862.

My dear Parents,—A mail has at last arrived and I have not heard from you. I must confess I am very much disappointed. I got one or two letters which spoke of other letters that had been sent me that I had not received. Em Hunting got one from his brother that spoke of your not having received anything from me. I have written half a dozen or more. I hope very sincerely that you will get this for it will apprise you that I am one of the happiest boys in the world because perhaps one of the busiest and because I am so perfectly well.

We are now detached from the regiment and are sent here to do garrison duty at Beaufort. It is a most beautiful place, that is, it appears so to our untutored gaze. We are here all by ourselves with the exception of a North Carolina home guard. I have been promoted and am now orderly of the Co. I am also acting Adjutant and Sergeant Major of the Battalion and am also post chaplain. I really have the duties of these posts to perform and the duties of orderly alone are very arduous. I work all the time from morning till night. I had an opportunity a few days since to have military business and receive the position of clerk where I should have had larger pay, a servant, a horse, a room

and leisure time and no fighting, but I declined it because the captain of the company wished me to remain with them.

I am really very happy and hope you will not be anxious about me. We shall most likely stay here all the time of our service and there is no danger from rebels and but little from the unhealthiness of the climate, for we are right by the salt water. This is a great improvement on our last camping place. I am now sitting writing before the fire in an open fire-place with a whole room to myself, the commander of a hundred men, quartered at the house. I have sent 30 or 40 on guard and the men are now patrolling the streets. I will write more soon. This goes by Rev. Mr. Pourard of Boston. . . .

Beaufort, December 8, 1862.

. . . We are now quartered in a house, have two rooms, a reception-room and a bed-room, a stove in which just now the fire is burning very brightly, all (that is, all we could expect) the conveniences of civilized life, a dog, a cat, a nigger to wait on us, a horse to ride, oysters plenty, hoe-cake, sweet potatoes, and other luxuries fresh and cheap. In fact, this must have been almost a paradise before the ravages of war. It is a seaport town and our house is only a few feet from the water's edge and an oyster bed.

Niggers are very plenty here as well as "secesh." The former are very obsequious but lazy. The poor white trash are even below the niggers and are very indolent and I would not be willing to trust them. My little nigger sits tending the fire, amusing himself by drumming. He puts on airs and asks anyone that comes for tobacco. I shall turn him off tomorrow and get a bigger and smarter one. I went to a nigger dance the other eve and I tell you 'twas a most ridiculous affair, but the darkies really kept very good time and danced well. There is no danger of an attack from the rebels here and we live in the same feeling of security as we did in

the camp at Readville. The prospects now are that we shall stay here the whole nine months altho' it is impossible to tell what will happen from one day to another. There's but little doubt now but that I shall return safe and improved in some respects before the 4th of next July. I have taken to military life and do not feel that I am out of my element at all in it.

Beaufort, December 14, 1862.

....I have no doubt that before this reaches you you will have heard that our Regiment (the 43) has gone off on a large expedition probably into the interior of this State.

As I have already written our company has been detached from the regiment and stationed here at Beaufort out of danger indeed, but out of the way to glory and usefulness at the same time, it seems to me.

If the object of a soldier's life is enjoyment and ease then we have it here. As far as I am concerned individually I am free from all hard work, have no fatigue duty or guard duty to do. In fact, do as much or as little as I choose. Until we got settled here I had to work all the time arranging matters and things but now tho' I am obliged to be at my room at all hours and to look after a great many things I have considerable leisure and no exhausting work at all. As I have already told you I have plenty to eat and a good comfortable bed-room with bed and mattress to sleep in. There is not a sufficient number of troops to guard this place in the way we have been guarding it and I very much fear that a large number of the men will give out under the hard work they have to do guarding.

I would rather run my risk of getting killed or wounded than of missing the sight of a big battle. The expedition which has started from Beaufort is 20,000 strong and is destined to do some big thing before it returns. There is a place open here for me to receive a commis-

sion if I choose to go into three years' service but I do not wish to and I do not think you would like to have me and so I'll keep on my stripes.

I went yesterday to an Episcopal church. The congregation was small, very few indeed apart from the soldiers. The minister was a strong Union man before our forces took possession of the place. It seemed pleasant to hear again the familiar words from the prayer-book, the same as at the Falls church.

We have had just enough excitement to keep us from dying of ennui. There have been a few arrests and a good deal of close watching.

It is proposed now to go on a little expedition to recover a light-boat chain with four or five hundred dollars. Our interest now centers in the great expedition. Please remember me to all my friends and write me some long letters and send me some papers. I have had *one* letter and two papers.

Beaufort, December 21, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I received two letters from you today. I rejoice to hear that you are well. I am positively in better health than I ever was before. I am very hearty and fat. You see I am situated so that I am not obliged to do any fatiguing duty of any sort. In fact, am not obliged to be out of the house over five minutes at once during the day and night and so am free from all exposure.

We have three quite sick in the company from typhoid fever. One of them is William Russel of West Needham. Their sickness is occasioned by sleeping on the cold ground. We are even more comfortably situated than when I wrote last. I went up to Newberne the other day and made quite a little visit. The expedition had left and the town was very quiet. I had a splendid time; slept in a hotel between sheets for the first time since I left the North. The expedition has returned, having accomplished not very much. The

news from the North is very discouraging. I am willing to go anywhere or do anything to put down the rebellion. I should be perfectly willing to go to Virginia and suffer as they are suffering if I could be of more service. You may tell my friends that my patriotism has not cooled in the slightest and that I do not desire to live after a dishonorable peace is made. We are living almost too much as though we came on a pleasure excursion. Enclosed find a native rose and geranium leaf. Your aff. son,

Joseph E.

Beaufort, December 30, 1862.

My dear Parents,—I received a letter from you yesterday and tho' it was of earlier date than one I had got before, was welcome. The first mail we got was 22 days late. I am not so lonesome or homesick here as you perhaps imagine. Everything is so comfortable and so much better than I expected, that I don't think of repining. The time is passing rapidly away with just adventure enough to keep us from ennui. An expedition goes out once in awhile to bring in a Secesh planter or his property or something of the sort. I for the most part am at my quarters and only leave on official business. Our captain just now is quite sick but I hope that he will recover before the disease has its course. We cannot afford to lose him even for a short time. I wrote you that Russel was sick. He is recovering now and will be out I hope in two or three weeks. The season is very healthful. I never was better in my life. I am getting fat on it. I have gained 12 lbs. since I left Massachusetts. I weigh 147 and feel "bully."

... The expedition that went out to Kingston was quite a success. I would "like to have been with them too." There were a good many little incidents connected with it that were of interest.

I went out into the Sound a few miles yesterday to recover the bodies of three men that had been drowned. I found one. It was an awful looking thing. He was buried, poor fellow, in the sand and there he will lie, "unhonored, unwept, unsung!" New supplies of troops are pouring in here. There will be an additional force of 10,000 men in a few days and Wilmington will be attacked. I do not expect our company will join it.

We shall probably be paid off in a day or two. I am paid from the 1st of September till January. You may imagine what shifts I have had to resort to for supplies. I'll do well enough now. Please write much and often....

Beaufort, January, 1863.

I think I'll send you a daguerreotype of myself as I appear in Beaufort, by one of our company, and perhaps one of our negroes who is the picture of laziness. The negroes are pretty much all lazy and shiftless. They do not seem to appreciate the pleasures of liberty. You know all the slaves in Virginia, North Carolina, etc. are free now and we treat them all as free men. Only two or three evenings since one of these freed women, an interesting mulatto, while going after her child, was caught, tied by her hands to a tree and barbarously whipped by two men. Union^a men, too, Heaven save the mark! He was not allowed to go unpunished but was treated the same as tho' the person in question had been white.

If the slaves only knew it, the "day of Jubilee" has indeed come to them.

Beaufort, January 5, 1863.

My dear Parents,—I suppose that you are willing to read all the letters I write, so I write at every opportunity. I receive letters now from you quite regularly and have no doubt but that I have all that you have written.

The time is passing quickly and pleasantly away and the nine months' term will soon be at an end. I hope the

war will close at the same time, for I do not care to make a life-long work of fighting. I am very glad indeed I enlisted especially so when I hear now and then of the death and wounding of my classmates and friends. How I should feel were I at Andover now and my old friends giving up their lives and comfort for me! It seems that three more of my college classmates have died, one has lost an arm and several have been wounded. It's sad and at the same time a cause of rejoicing. I'm proud to be a member of such a fraternity. Phillips who died at Fort Royal was a very fine fellow and so was Gholson who was shot in Kentucky. . . I have heard from the 44th boys. They are heartily sick of the service. . . I do not believe there are any companies in the service better off than ours.

The expedition that I have spoken of is the one that is destined to go against Wilmington and Charleston. The war vessels are in sight of me as I sit writing now. Two of them are iron clad monitors, perfect wonders in their way. There is one tremendous gun that measures 12ft. 6 inches round the breech, throws a 450-lb. ball, requires 35 lbs. of powder to discharge her and can be loaded only once in five minutes. It is a perfect wonder as is everything about the vessel which is the Passaic. I visited her the other day. Then another has come in since, the Montauk. I am sorry to say that the Monitor went down when coming round Cape Hatteras. The expedition will be one of considerable magnitude but I have no doubt that it will be very successful. . . If you intend sending a box. . . don't send anything that will be hurt by being a long time en route . . . By the way, I have not heard anything of those photographs that you were to have taken.

Beaufort, Saturday evening, January 10, 1863.

My dear Parents,—I feel tonight very much as if I would like to see you and spend the evening in the sitting room under the shade of the big Geranium and by the stove. . . . The day is gloomy and dreary, the first one

in fact since we have been here and we have been here now nearly a month and a half. I understand that the rainy season commences soon. . . usually before this. It will continue, I suppose for a number of weeks with but little intermission.

I still continue to grow fat. Today I weighed 152 lbs. My weight at home was 133. . . Before this till within a week I have had my time all taken up, but now that everything moves smoothly on I have but little to do, in fact as little as any one in the company. I am endeavoring to fill up the time by studying or rather by reading some Greek and Latin books which I have found lying round hereabouts. They are treasures and carry me back to my old College days. . . I have had the pleasure of meeting here an old College acquaintance. The meeting was quite an agreeable one, and yet sad. The poor fellows are passing away so quickly. Their deaths are sad and yet enviable. Envable indeed, if we who live shall live under a broken government,—and survive the glorious Country that gave us birth.

We have just heard news of reported victories in Tenn. and Miss. I hope they are true. My heart sickens to think that after all we may have suffered reverses. God grant we may not have done so. For all my ill forebodings I can yet see just cause for hope and rejoicing. We commence now with where we left off last April, with Vicksburg, Nashville, the line of the Potomac and the various places on the Southern Coast. Should all our expeditions be successful the war will be ended very soon. The expedition that is fitting out at this place will be very large. 75,000 troops will accompany it. A large number of war vessels, iron clads, gunboats, transports and material of every description. Where it is destined we do not know but suppose for Wilmington and Charleston. It may be, however, for the interior of this State or even Virginia, tho' the latter is not at all probable. I am very glad that we are detached from our regiment for while. . . the company

has comfortable quarters in barracks, the regiments have tents pitched in a very unhealthy place. Unless we go into active service I hope we shall stay here and I have no doubt we shall.

I suppose you think that by this time I have seen enough of soldiers' life to give an idea of how I like it and what I think of it. I suppose I have for after all a battle is not the main thing in a soldier's life. It lasts only a few hours at the longest and then comes a monotonous existence of months perhaps. ... If I come home again I shall have gained I really believe immensely in many things. Don't feel at all unhappy or uneasy on my behalf.

Beaufort, January 18, 1863.

My dear Parents,— Your letters have reached me quite regularly and frequently. I can appreciate them better than I ever could before. Don't stop writing. The mails have not left here with any regularity; it's been a long time since any have left at all. You will probably see that our regiment has the names of several battles inscribed on its banners. It has gone on another expedition and left us behind. You inquire after Russel. He is gaining and will soon come out of the Hospital. The Hospital at this Post is a model. It is a large Hotel with several buildings connected with it. Everything in it is as neat, comfortable and convenient as could be wished. Every luxury even is afforded the patients. The sick are supplied with wines, whiskey, etc. and the convalescent with chicken, eggs and the like. Russel could not have lived had he been in the regimental hospital.

Hunting is doing well. He does his duty right up to the handle.

Of course a box would be very acceptable but it is not absolutely necessary. If one is sent I would like in it a pair of woolen undershirts, two pairs of stockings, a gold pen, some writing paper, similar to what I will enclose in this letter, which can be had at No. 7 Water

St. and some envelopes. I would like also a Colt's Pistol of latest pattern with cartridges. I also want very much to have you send on whether you send a box or not, your photographs. I send you one of mine to show you how fat I have grown. If you do send me a box do not send anything that will spoil like common cake or apples or the like. I should like some rich fruit cake. I would like a few cheap bound books, light reading you know. Atwood would tell you what I would like best, only three or four at most. The expedition has started and we shall soon know whither it is bound. God grant it success.

Beaufort, January 31, 1863.

My dear Parents,—An opportunity is offered us of sending letters North directly...The expedition has at last sailed and all embargo has been removed from the mail-bags. Now we are again living the monotony of the life we had before the expedition. The Harbor has been filled and we had a great number of men ashore daily. Only a few schooners and gunboats remain...

Beaufort, February 4, 1863.

My dear Parents,—You wanted me to write to you after I received the box you sent. I received it last Saturday. The contents were very welcome. The pen, cake, butter, pickles, apples, etc. were in good condition. The chicken, mince meat, etc. spoiled. Aside from the pen, the cake was of most value. I would like very much to have sent me a sword. I have to borrow one now and I really need one. I want one on the pattern of an officer's, with the belt, without all the finery. You see I am adjutant and shall be undoubtedly till the end of the service and a sword is a necessary article. It will come perfectly safe by Adams Express. I would like the pistol also. Patten I think will be the best man to get it. I will send you the money as soon as we are paid off, which I expect will be very soon. Any time

that you feel like sending me cake or books I shall render most humble thanks. Everything is progressing favorably, no particular danger of an attack and no great danger if an attack is made.

The time hangs rather heavy. I miss very much the society of ladies,—and *gentlemen*, too. . . .

Beaufort, N. C. February 12, 1863.

There's nothing new to chronicle down here. There's not the slightest probability of an attack in this place nor is there any chance of our removal from Beaufort. Personally I am in the confidence of all the officers and not unpopular with the men. I am much better off than my warmest anticipations of military life led me to hope. I fear I shall like it too well. I have some strong temptations offered me here to continue in the service in another departure. I don't suppose it would be at all pleasing to you.

The work I have to do has a sameness to it and would hardly be interesting to you if recounted. I will however go over the ground as I have to others and give you a general idea of my duties. At 6.30 A. M. the drum is beat and the men turned out. As Orderly Sergeant I see that they turn out and form into line. I then call the Roll of a hundred names, mark those absent and give them some extra duty to do. The detail for guard is then read for the day. At 7 breakfast. At 8.30 Guard Mounting (a military form). At this I act as Sergeant Major and Adjutant. At 12 dinner. At 3 drill when I drill or not as I choose. At 4.30 I act as Adjutant on Dress Parade, the Military Pageant of the day. At 5 is supper. At 8 Roll Call. At 9 taps when all lights are extinguished, except the officers'. After that time I am at my own service and enjoy a couple of hours very much. But my duties are not all shown by this summary by any means. As Adjutant I have charge of our own company and the North Carolina Company and an "invalid guard" as regards

guard duty and a few other particulars. I am you see on the "staff" of the Commander of the Post. As Orderly Sergeant I have the Roll to call, the guard to detail, have charge of the sick, of the cook house, rations, etc., of the Company's fund (which by the way is quite large) in so far as the Company need little luxuries. (As for instance I bought yesterday a barrel of onions as good as ever were raised on the famous onion bed for a dollar and eighty cents, which I considered a good bargain), the cleanliness of the men, in fact there's scarcely anything that one can conceive of that I do not have to do—in a small military way.

I have some recreation but not very much. We some times serenade officers, go to the Hotel to have a sing, have a game of catch. Sometimes I take a sail or horse-back ride (as I did last night). But I have not been out of town at night with a single exception and that I spent at Newberne, nor have I been off duty a single moment from sickness or any other cause. You see I'm right on my taps. We manage to live tolerably well, not confining ourselves to Army regulations or rations. I bought a keg of salmon yesterday and we buy beef-steak, sausages, cake, etc., and once in a while have a turkey or duck dinner. For reading we have all, and all the variety we wish. The standard periodicals, including back numbers, Scott's novels, Histories, Latin and Greek books. (By the way, I have a pupil in Latin.) We have everything our own way and all privileges so long as we do not abuse them.

There's a fellow who takes daguerreotypes in our company. I send you one taken poorly but it gives you an idea of how I appear in Beaufort, N. C. I am in my "Post Adjutant's" dress, you will see.

Newberne, March 2, 1863.

My dear Parents,—Down here we came yesterday and tomorrow we go on an expedition. The camp is all alive and I am especially busy so I have but a moment. The sword and pistol have been received. How much

did they cost? I've had 25 dollars offered for it already. I have no fears for myself in this expedition but if I should not survive it accept my thanks for the most kind and indulgent care that parents can give a son and that I have a bright and living hope of immortal life in our Saviour and leader.

Your aff. son,

J. E. Fiske

Newberne, March 7, 1863.

My dear Parents,—In a hastily and foolishly written note I informed you that we were bound off on an expedition. It seems that the order was only contingent upon the defeat of others sent out already. The expedition having met with no reverse we have not been called upon and consequently we are still in camp on the banks of the Trent and a very pretty camp it is, too. It is the best and most healthful in this department and beside that it is the prettiest and best laid out. Well, to go back to Beaufort. We were ordered away to make room for the 5th Mass., the members of which have been very unhealthy and many of whom have died. We had some regrets at leaving but nevertheless we willingly obeyed. For three months we were well-quartered in houses and had all the privileges of a town, myself many more than commissioned officers in regimental camp. But we are very well situated here and it is reported that we shall remove to Newberne to do Provost duty in a day or two, in which case we shall again be quartered in houses,—tho' I do not believe that they are as healthful as tents. The only thing to be regretted thus far in our soldier's life is the death of Billy Kingsbury, one of the best men of the company. It is a satisfaction to know that he had one of the best of our New England physicians to attend him and that nothing was omitted which might tend to work his recovery or relieve his sufferings. This is a very warm day, Sunday, very much like an August day,

a "dog day" with now and then a warm breeze, not at all refreshing. I expect it will be overpoweringly warm in a few weeks from now. By the way, there's a report in circulation that we go home before our time is out and be offered a chance to reenlist in the 43d. Reg. remodelled. At all events our time is nearly out; only about three months more to remain here. I am very sorry we did not go on the expedition for we shall not probably have a chance to go at all. It passed by us, regiment after regiment, cavalry, infantry, artillery, baggage trains, ambulances, pioneers, all in the best of spirits ready to encounter the foe and support the glorious old flag.

We had a splendid flag-raising yesterday. The whole Regiment turned out and saluted it. The Colonel has become very popular. You know he was not at Readville. The men then supposed that he was very austere and morose but he has now proved himself just the contrary and the men all like him. Capt. Fowle's popularity increases daily and the men love him more and more. I expect he will raise a regiment and that we will come out again with him. Won't that be "bully?"

I haven't had my letters regularly lately. I wonder what's the matter.

P. S. The pistol and sword are "perfect beauties" just exactly what I wanted.

Newberne, March 17, 1863.

My dear Parents,—The mail goes soon but I have time to tell you that I have returned from an expedition against a party of rebels. We had quite an exciting time and a hard march but no fighting. Your predictions about my falling out by the way were unfulfilled. I am good for any amount of marching and can endure fatigue as well as any one. Nothing seems to affect my health unfavorably. . . . I am more averse than ever to going home without seeing a brush, but I do not believe we shall see a fight. I enjoyed our march and camp-

ing very much indeed, tho' I suppose much of the charm of it was owing to its novelty. It is rumored that we start on another this afternoon but I very much doubt it.

Newberne, March 20, 1863.

My dear Parents,—Word has just come that "the mail for the North closes at eleven." The only thing that occasions any excitement in camp is the rumor about going home on the 10th of June or near that time. It does not seem very long before June. I shall like very much to see home once more, tho' I'm no more desirous of it than I used to be at Andover where I used to enjoy myself so much.. The attack on Newberne did not amount to much. One gun from the "Hunchback" dismounted three of their guns and killed or wounded twenty or thirty men. It was the first shot and a good one. Our regiment is an exceedingly healthy one, more so than any in the department. I was over to see my old friend Snow. He does not like his position. He is very much discouraged.

I suppose they will need all the young men of the country for some years to come.... I also visited some of the Needham boys in the 45th Reg. The fatigue and sickness you prophesied have not reached me yet.

Yours affectionately,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Direct to Co. C. 43d Reg. Mass. V. M.

Camp Rogers, Near Newberne, April 4, 1863.

....We are under marching orders now and have been for a week, doing nothing in camp, no drilling, no camp duties except guard duty. We look forward to the time when our time of service shall be over and hope at the same time we shall see the end of the rebellion. If not, however, I shall seriously ask your permission to continue in the service.... It does not seem possible that any other path lies open to me. There have been re-

ports of attacks from various quarters by the rebels and there is no doubt but that two regiments are penned up at "little Washington" and quite a force has been sent to their relief. I have no doubt but that our forces have been successful before this as the firing has stopped and we have no bad news.

Camp Rogers, Near Newberne, April 7, 1863.

My dear Parents,—I write with my equipments on to march to transports to go to Little Washington. I'm perfectly well and in splendid spirits. If I am killed or wounded I shall be satisfied falling in the defence of my country.

Schooner "Fly," April 15, 1863.

Two weeks ago last Wednesday I started with Snow to visit the old battle ground of Newberne but before we had proceeded far on our way we were retained by immediate marching orders. We waited further orders in camp, doing nothing until a week ago Tuesday when we were ordered at nine o'clock, just as we had "turned in" to set out immediately to go to Newberne to go on transports, which we did, but we were only ferried across the river. The transports were busy all night carrying troops, artillery, etc., across and until one o'clock the next day when there were together about 10,000 troops, 20 pieces of artillery and two or three companies of cavalry. We set out then, marching slowly and then more rapidly until 8 o'clock. Before this time we had split and a part of the forces had stopped at a crossroads while about a third went four miles farther along. In the morning we came back four miles and then marched very rapidly ten miles when the Generals had a consultation. Before this we had been driving a small force for several miles. We then advanced, the 17th Mass. skirmished and ours was the reg. in advance. We had only gone a short distance when the rebels opened with their cannon. The skir-

mishers were driven in and the wounded began to come in, too. The shells occasionally burst near us and even over us but the fire from the Rebs was not very active. We were informed that the battery against us was a battery of two guns, (but we have since found that it consisted of ten guns) situated across a creek, the bridge across which had been burned. We were ordered back but we supposed we were to flank the Rebs and went with alacrity, but they kept us marching on and on until we had gone eleven miles on the retreat, marching in all nearly thirty miles. I am glad to say that though more than two-thirds of the regiment fell out, I kept up, with 40 rounds of cartridges, two large blankets, three days' rations, a canteen full of water, my musket and extra stockings, towels, &c. You see you didn't know me when you thought I couldn't stand marching &c. &c. The next day we went into camp duty and stayed one night and the next day were ordered up here in the vicinity of Washington, N. C. which place is threatened. All but three companies of the reg. went to camp yesterday but we were put on board a schooner and here we are comfortable and contented. We are having hard times tho'; but little to eat, sleeping on coal in the hold and drenched through with rain. Since I have been writing five of our gunboats have been shelling the rebel batteries in sight of us. They have just succeeded in passing them. We expect that the forces at Newberne will set out on an expedition to capture the Rebs and we may have to stay here for a week or even two or three. I will endeavor to write you a more detailed account of my adventures when I have better conveniences. The object for which we are left here is to act as sharpshooters and to run past the batteries. Some of our boys ran by safely on little schooners, but a steamer that tried it was cut up badly, had her pilot killed and came near being destroyed. I like the excitement we have been having but the hardship has been great. Some of the time we have been glad to eat raw

salt pork but I have been always perfectly well.

Camp Rogers, Near Newberne, April 25, 1863.

My dear Parents,—We are back at Camp Rogers once more after a very protracted tramp. We arrived at 2 o'clock this morning and I have only time to say that tho' I am weary and dirty I am well and that as soon as I can (which will most likely be tomorrow) I will write a detailed account of the whole expedition which though a success was almost a bloodless one. The prospect is that we remain in camp for the rest of the service. Our time (as now stated) expires on the 13th of July at which time we shall be mustered out of the service.

Your aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Camp Rogers, May 13, 1863.

...There's not the slightest need of us here now. There may be soon, however. We really expect to be home in the early part of June. It is quite warm here now, so warm that we have drills only early in the morning and late in the evening.

I feel very sorry to hear of the defeat of Gen. Hooker; the war must be still further prolonged....

Camp Rogers, Near Newberne, May 17, 1863.

...In reading the papers I see such false accounts of what is going on in this department that I almost think I had better give you a journal of my movements and thoughts. For instance, a letter in the New York Herald represents the 43d Mass. Reg. as continually engaged in skirmishing and gallantly driving the enemy and "seeing their leader, Col. Holbrook, making his way over fallen trees through swamps" &c. The facts of the case being that we did not see a "Reb" while we were away and did not walk more than six miles and were at no time twenty rods away from the railroad. Another absurd story is that we were in Kingston marching

toward Richmond while we are and have been in camp. There is one thing that interests the men and that is when our time will be out. There are various opinions on the subject. I think we may not reach home till the 1st of August and by some interpretations the Government has a right to hold us till the 1st of September. But there are nevertheless good reasons for supposing that we shall be mustered out on Boston Common on or about the 20th of June or a month from this time. We had news up to the 12th from Hooker's army. We are sanguine that we all will succeed. Won't it be glorious to have once more peace and an undivided country? I am sorry to see that O. W. Holmes is wounded and Bill Perkins and also that my old chum Emerson is taken prisoner. I wish I could send you home a most magnificent bouquet I had presented me by a very nice old lady in Beaufort. Did I tell you about her? She adopted me as her son and I felt quite as sorry at leaving her as for any other person or thing at Beaufort...We have but very little camp duty to do now...The men are very lazy indeed...Strawberries have been plenty since the first of the month and bushels of blackberries are ripening just outside the lines. The only thing we (that is, one of the Sergts. and myself who are partners in everything) have to furnish is sugar for our boy picks the berries and cooks them. He is a very useful contraband. He goes with us on marches and blacks our boots, washes our dishes, cooks our extra dishes, &c. I have not told you about the negroes. If it were not for their ignorance which is only adventitious and the prejudice which exists against them they would not be so *very* far below the white man. The queerest sight I ever saw was on board the "Fly" when lying down on the Hold on the coal heap asleep, I was awakened by a confused noise rather suppressed and inquiring in vain what it was I "shinned up" the rope on deck and there found a medley that it would be useless to attempt to describe. There were about twenty-five darkies of both sexes and all sizes, dressed

in all kinds of clothes of varied hues. And such a lot of baggage! In the first place as most interesting to you, three dogs, then a number of fowl, a spinning wheel, some cotton, corn, a few dozen of eggs, a variety of bed clothes, a pumpkin shell, a number of chairs, shoemakers' tools, several guns (old flint locks) and any quantity and quality of other things. I engaged some of their eggs and went back to my coal heap again and to meditating.

Near Newberne, May 26, 1863.

My dear Parents,—At last we have a cool day, because cloudy. The thermometer for a week or so has varied from 85 to 95 in the shade and during the day we have only found the coolest place possible and kept quiet. A very unexpected source of annoyance is the vast quantity of flies which light and fasten upon almost everything, sometimes actually blackening the face and hands. Mosquitoes as yet are not plentiful and in this camp with the exception of an occasional snake or lizard we are free from the presence of reptiles.

We have been under marching orders but luckily we have not been away. The other brigade of our division went up to Cove Creek and made quite a capture of Rebs &c. but with our usual luck when any success was to be attained we were out of it. No glory for us, but work enough!

125 prisoners were captured but we lost a Colonel; a very great loss he was, too. Do not anticipate our coming home in June. The probability is that we shall be home about the middle of July. I've got acclimated now and have not been injured in my constitution at all. We are hopeful that we shall see the successful end of the war. My old chum Emerson is missing, they fear he is killed but hope not.

Near Newberne, May 31, 1863.

My dear Parents,—I hoped I should be able to come North by the steamer that brings this letter but...I

shall be obliged to wait till the last of the week. I have the pleasure to announce that I have been honorably discharged from the 43rd Mass. And also I have to tell you what I fear may not be so pleasant to you, that I have been sworn into the U.S. service for three years as a Lieut. (2d) in the 2d Reg. Mass. Heavy Artillery, the most desirable arm of the service and, if you like, the least perilous. I shall soon be at home and at once shall go at work recruiting men for my company. I am the only officer commissioned in the company, and promotion will be governed by my success. I am promised a 1st Lieut. but promises in war amount to but little. I hope you will not be displeased with what I have done. I have acted according to my own best judgment. I am pleased to tell you that the position was obtained for me by others who knew nothing of me till I enlisted and that my position was gained through military and not by political influence. Mine has been the first promotion since the actual organization of the regiment. On the same day on which I got my present appointment I had an offer of a Capt's position in Infantry and the next day Col. Holbrook said that had I stayed with the regiment on its reorganization I would have had a better position than I now hold. In addition my men all like me and all the officers are very friendly. Congratulate me! Do not tell anyone the contents of this letter so far as it relates to vainglorious boasting. I had hoped to surprise you all by an abrupt return...but I perceive I have failed. I hope to find you well.

I shall be at home at least three months, by which time you will have got tired of me. Remember I'll be home very soon and don't forget to have some thing for me to eat.

Yours very aff.

Joseph E. Fiske.

New York Harbor. On board transport "Empire City"
December 18, 1863

My dear Parents,—I am thus far on my way towards Dixie. How long I am to remain here it is not possible to know. It is stormy, very, and disagreeable and tho' not absolutely uncomfortable is very far from being pleasant,—as you may imagine from the fact that the cabin where we are situated was last used to transport horses in. My relative position is quite unlike what it was in Boston Harbor on board the Merrimac. I had for a short time yesterday the command of some four hundred men, being senior officer on board. I have fortunately since been relieved by a ranking officer. Everything went off well when we left Readville, tho' we were very much hurried just before we left. The men were quite orderly on the way to New York and have not troubled me much since. Some to be sure have been drunk but there's not been near the trouble that I have seen before on transports. All we ask now is that the weather shall clear away and that we arrive safe at Fortress Monroe and receive our quarters permanently. I am perfectly well and considerably rested from the fatigue of my labors of the past few weeks which you know have been quite arduous. . . . My first Lieut. is in New York but I felt that it was due to my men that I should not leave them and so I am here in this disagreeable horse stall. . . . We have on board a number of deserters, Rebel and U. S. prisoners, convalescents, etc., a very miscellaneous conglomeration, as you can at once see. Goodbye and God bless you both.

Your son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Norfolk, December 20, 1863.

.... We have arrived and found what we have to do,— viz. garrison Fort O'Rourke, very near this place. Everything has gone on splendidly.

Fort O'Rourke, Norfolk, Va., December 22, 1863.

...It is on an old camping ground about a mile from Norfolk across the Eastern branch of Elizabeth River. The fort is a small one mounting five Barbett's guns (the guns, by the way, are not mounted) and the fort commands the approach by the railroad to Norfolk. Another fort is to be built by our companies about a mile from here. Barring some unavoidable losses we arrived in the very best of shape not losing a single man and having no very great trouble with the men. The men are very good material for soldiers and I have the fullest faith that I shall have a first-rate company after the proper time has passed. The weather is very pleasant and I am now writing out of doors without an overcoat. It seems as though I was very near home, being but a journey of thirty-six hours from home and better than that there is telegraphic communication between here and there so you see I'm only about an hour from home after all.

We have very good officers and everything promises a very pleasant sojourn considering *that we are in the service*.

The newness of the men and my own in regard to company business occasions many vexations but a few hours serve to dispel all unpleasant feelings and I get to be "jolly" till something else turns up.

You should know about our "mess" which we have just started. We have been boarding at a "Hotel" in the outskirts of the town. The fare was quite good, consisting of oysters, honey, beef, etc., etc., but we concluded it would be pleasanter to mess together and as one of my men had brought his wife along we set her at work cooking. We have bought a cooking-stove, candles, dried apples, bargained for oysters, milk, etc. to be regularly supplied, hired a room near by and

made all our family arrangements. I shall have work enough to do for some time to come squaring my accounts which are not in a very clear condition. Tomorrow I commence on them and hope for the best results. I had no definite idea of the labor which it was necessary to bestow on a company before I took command but I have already the satisfaction of seeing considerable improvement in drill and discipline during the very short time I have been in command here. ...I think of you very often indeed and many times wish I were with you in my dear old home...Give my love to all my friends.

Fort O'Rourke, January 2, 1864.

...You can't have any idea of the work I have to do. There are so very many things to look after and one branch of my business I have heretofore had no experience in, viz: keeping books, but I think that I shall manage to square up things in pretty good style. I have a good company of men, I really believe and what is more they are working hard and cheerfully to perfect themselves in drill and discipline. There are some few delinquents and of course I have to punish them. ...The commanding officer is a very fine man, though no older than I am. He is a gentleman. Almost all the officers are nice fellows. One is a Harvard man and one an Oxford (England) man. I must tell you what we are up to now. Myself and Lieut. have made an arrangement to have religious services in a little church which has been vacant for some time, taking turns preaching. Isn't that nice? And we also have made arrangements for holding meetings of contraband children on Sunday and other evenings. Isn't that nice too? And all nine of us officers have signed a pledge to abstain entirely from the use of intoxicating liquors (including even wines) while in this department. I hope all will keep it as all are bound to do on the word of officers and gentlemen..

Fort O'Rourke, January 13, 1864.

...You seem to be in doubt about my health. I am just as comfortably situated as you are. It is raining quite fast but we are perfectly dry and warm. Two tents placed

together make our parlor and bedroom. We have had a change of commanders today, or rather a superior officer has come and relieved my Senior Captain. Four companies have just arrived here making the balance of the regiment. The Colonel is here with the Adjutant Quartermaster, etc. We are about at a standstill here now on account of the mud which is so deep and general that it is useless to try to drill. For a few days the ground was frozen and covered with snow that was crusted on but the rain last night removed that and now it's mud every where....I send at the same time I send this letter a return of my "Clothing Camp and Garrison Equipage" account, which I have at last managed to straighten out. I lost some clothing and a good deal of private property among which was that splendid sword I had presented to me just before I left. ...

Fort O'Rourke, January 24, 1864.

..I am busy and merry all day long. There's not much prospect that I shall ever be idle until I leave my company. I can not entrust my company to a Lieut. I must always know all about it myself, and attend to the Company business as well as drill and discipline. Perhaps an account of today's work will amuse and interest you. I got up at eight o'clock, made out the morning report of my company, took breakfast and then went out to the inspection of my company, took every musket in my hand. Examined the clothes and equipment of the men even to the buttons on the coats and hats. Their knapsacks and spare clothing were then overhauled and afterward I inspected their tents. Then I sent two squads to church at Norfolk and sent men out in the woods to improve the condition of their tents. Then took a lunch. By that time I was in command of the whole company of 500 or 600 men. Soon after I had to obey an order and write an official document. Then the Adj. Genl. of the post in the vicinity came and blew up the camp for some dereliction of duty. Then four men came home drunk from Church. Then I had the Articles of War read to the Company. Then dress parade. Then Col. Draper of Lynn came to see me

and inspected the Company. Then a deserter was brought to me whom I had to put in irons, then dinner, besides filling out requisitions, looking after my sick, writing letters until I am so tired that I have stayed home from the contraband meeting I usually attend on Sunday eve. This is what I do or something similar every day, and I must say it just suits me. We have had several inspections lately and I have the credit of having quite as good a company as any here and I feel quite proud of it. My men, as far as I am able to judge, are very well satisfied and do their duty very well indeed. . . . The "Small Pox" is prevalent hereabout so I have been vaccinated. We have two more companies here and some of us have got to move. It would only be a short distance. I send you a photograph of me to show you that I am well and happy.

Fort O' Rourke, February 3, 1864.

. . . I have been quite well since I wrote and my arm which was quite painful for a while is much better. The Small Pox is quite prevalent about here and quite a number of soldiers have died with it. I have lost none. We have a little Hospital here. It is the Church we used to preach in. It has been used as a Hospital for the Rebs. Near here is a family of Northern people who keep a boat which we use occasionally, and enjoy the pleasure very much. At present I have two officers detailed and over 50 men absent and 35 sick. I have just had an addition of five men who have been transferred from another company making a total of 149. Out of all these there is but one deserter. Isn't that doing well? I have two or three who have either worked out sentences or are now working them out. I have been accuser, judge and executioner in regard to the same person. I get along much better than I ever anticipated. I have recovered one of the boxes lost on my passage down containing most of the valuable articles lost, including some articles of personal property. The value of the things recovered was about \$110 and as the recovery of them was of more consequence than the money value you can imagine I felt quite jolly

tonight. Everything in regard to my accounts is exactly right and I do not expect any more trouble from them the rest of the three years.

I see that there is to be more volunteering. Don't you want me to come home and go to recruiting? I would like it quite well. It's pleasant for a soldier here but for many reasons it would be more agreeable at home in Massachusetts. Whenever you think of me imagine me most cosily and comfortably situated without anything in particular to trouble or vex me. Besides I'm not getting at all hard-hearted or one bit demoralized. . . .

Fort O'Rourke, February 5, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I received a letter from you today and have only time to say that orders came this afternoon to pack up and be off, most likely to Newberne again which is besieged. Goodbye. I'll write to you as soon as I can.

Your aff. son,

J. E. Fiske.

Yorktown, Va., February 7, 1864.

...we were sent up to this place so full of historical incident. I received orders Friday last to be in readiness to leave at a moment's notice with my Company and camp and garrison equipage, this order was followed by another order which commanded me to embark on the "Long Branch" at daybreak. The steamer was at Norfolk, about a mile and a half away. I did as I was ordered with four large baggage wagons full of Company and personal property. I had the whole steamer to myself and a pleasant trip of four hours. Arrived here I found that an expedition of from 10,000 to 20,000 men had gone toward Richmond and left the place with only 120 men. With this force the whole line had to be guarded and now we have here only about 400 men. We have here about 100 guns, some of them of the largest calibre. I have charge of one of the two main redoubts which command the fort and vicinity. It contains about ten guns, very fine ones indeed and in case of an attack I hope to use them with

good effect. The "Rebs" are said to be within a mile of us but on the other side of the river. The expedition has gone to Richmond, so it is reported and we have already heard of it beyond Bottom Bridge only 13 miles this side of that devoted town. We have also heard of an engagement and that quite a number have been killed and wounded; we expect that the wounded will begin to come in very soon. I do not wish to be obliged to see them, as I shall be obliged to do as they will go directly by my quarters. I feel quite jolly to think that I have at last got where there is to say the least a war-like look. Just imagine us in a fort a mile and a half round in with some of the very earthworks drawn up in the time of the Revolution. There is one of the British breastworks within ten paces of where I now am, enclosing the house in which Lord Cornwallis lived while here, a very well built mansion, now used for a Hospital. These fortifications were also those used by the Rebs and taken by McLellan. If anyone thinks he ought to have stormed the place instead of throwing up breastworks I wish he might stand on the parapet and see the defences. It seems as though it was utterly impossible to take the place by any means whatever. Why, there are ravines a hundred feet deep with sides almost perpendicular and the whole series of works is bristling with guns and yet the number is not nearly so great as the Rebs had when they were here. . . . I was quite comfortably situated at Fort O'Rourke and when the order came to go was quite disappointed for I had made arrangements to remain permanently and had spent considerable money, but I took what things I could with me and had the rest stored. When I arrived here I found an unoccupied building which I at once chose for my residence and before night had my quarters arranged and slept under a roof on my mattress, the same I had slept on the night before at Ft. O'Rourke, and now I am writing at my table before a blazing fire in an open fireplace with my clothes hung up all about the room, my Ft. O'Rourke washstand, etc., floor nicely swept and a nice little dog on my bed. We have been to supper on tea, coffee, toast and cranberry sauce in our own quarters. You will see that I

have become so much of a soldier that I know how to make the best of everything. We are ten times better off than the other company which followed us. . . .

On Board L. R. Spaulding, February 9, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I wrote you day before yesterday from Yorktown supposing I should remain there for a short time at least but last night the order to move with all our camp and garrison equipage came and here we are on board this steamer awaiting orders. We probably go to Newberne to assist in repelling an attack on that place. I do not know what has been the result of the advance on Richmond tho' I suppose from the best I can gather that we have been defeated. I only hope for the better. Everything thus far has gone well. I have over 130 men with me and they have thus far been well taken care of. I do not think that there is much danger of a fight and rather expect to go to Beaufort again. It will be very jolly to get back there again. I should like to hear from you. Be sure to direct to Capt. Jos. E. Fiske, 2d Reg. Mass. Heavy Artillery, Newberne, N. C. It is a most beautiful day and we are lying off Fortress Monroe with a large number of transports about us and all looks pleasant and happy as though there was no such thing as war in the Universe. One of our Captains deserted his post and Company on approach of the enemy and is now in close confinement.

Newberne, February 12, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I am now on board the "Pilot Boy," bound for Plymouth, N. C. When I arrive I will write further. The mails will not be very regular. I am very well and having a jolly time. We hope to be stationed at Plymouth and undoubtedly shall be for a long time. There are no "rebs" in this vicinity.

Plymouth, N. C., February 15, 1864.

My dear Parents,—Again I am in a new place and take but little satisfaction in the fact that we are to move in a day or two. I will just write enough to as usual inform you of my whereabouts and that I am also as usual very well. I am *now* in a temporary camp but when I move I shall take command of a fort a mile and a half away and shall most likely remain for a long time. The mail only reaches us at long intervals and we are quite out of the world. On that account I want long letters and want them very often. By good fortune a boat (not the regular mail) goes to Norfolk this afternoon. The mail comes once in ten days.

We have been on the move for the past week, first to Yorktown, then to Fort Monroe, then to Beaufort, then Newberne and finally here. This is a small town on the Roanoke eight miles up the river. It has been burnt more than half down by the Rebs. It is now quite well fortified. I shall not have so much pleasure as before. In fact with my detachment I shall be alone but I shall write and read all the more. . . . Tell all my friends that I shall write to them quite soon. Give my address to those whom you know write—which is Plymouth, N. C. I will write to you tonight a detailed account of my wanderings.

Goodbye.

Your aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Plymouth, N. C., February 19, 1864.

My dear Parents,—A mail leaves for the North tomorrow and I will fulfill my agreement of writing to you a fuller history of the last week or two. I am now about a mile from the town in command of a small but quite important fort which is used as a protection to the town chiefly from an attack from an iron clad and gunboats reported up the river but also from a possible land attack.

We enjoyed our passages from one place to another very much indeed though I will confess we regretted very much

leaving our comfortable quarters at Norfolk. While on our way we stopped a short time at a short distance from Beaufort and I went over to see the place again. Everything seemed quite familiar. The people remembered us and wished us to remain. Nothing would have pleased me better but of course I had no choice. I found that our regiment or a part of it had acquired a bad name and that one of the Captains was under arrest for cowardice—and another officer for deserting his post and another for drunkenness, and I had scores of applications from men that I had enlisted to be transferred to my company. Some of them are treated with great cruelty; tied to iron yokes, put on knapsack drill without compunction; things that no one but brutes are capable of doing. I thank Heaven that I am not capable of treating another man as some of these heartless officers do. Everything at Newberne was as it was before except that the town was much quieter. When we left the place we left behind us one of our officers, Lieut. Greene, sick in the Hospital. It seemed sad to leave him. He is a very nice young man indeed and a very good officer. I like him, I think, better than any officer in the detachment.

It has been very cold indeed here for a day or two—so cold that the water in my tent freezes quite solid, even the ink freezes, and I shiver under six blankets. But it is growing milder and I think the snow which fell last evening will melt tomorrow. I have managed to keep my men quite comfortable though they have been without stoves till today, many of them. I believe that I really have their best interests at heart all the time and I really feel quite as much for them as myself. I very much regret that the company has been divided as it has been into detachments so that there are here at Fort Gray only about 60 men and at other forts 35, 25, 10 and still others at Norfolk.

I have much less to do or shall and therefore shall do more writing and reading. We tried our guns here yesterday and with our shot hit a target about four feet square at over 200 yards and with our 100 pound parrot threw water over a barrel in the water distant a mile and a quarter. This is

considered very good shooting—and as we have so exact a range we think we could handle the Rebs provided they did not come in too great force. I believe there is no one in my company whom you know with the exception of Mr. Gibson. I have appointed him a Corporal more on account of his former acquaintance than on account of his ability as a soldier.

Goodbye. Please write me how you do. I am perfectly well.

Joseph Emery.

Fort Gray, February 25, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I have received two letters from home today and half a dozen others from various sources. All were welcome I assure you. It seems as though I had been here in this place for years, so familiar has everything become and yet it is only today that my tent has become fit to live in. I have had it nicely arranged and now it is as nice as a palace, and I am jolly as a cricket. I have my two tents together again with parlor and bedroom and things established pretty much as at Fort O'Rourke only nicer. I made my first shots today and came quite near the target with every time I fired. It is quite good fun. To load the Parrot gun is required ten pounds of powder and a shot of 100 lbs. To load the Thirty-twos 8 lbs. of powder and 32 and 14 shot and shell. We fired two shell and exploded them quite near the objects aimed at.

Here now there is a dull routine and with the exception of work at the end of the month I shall have nothing whatever to do. My non-commissioned officers do all the drilling and in fact almost everything. And as we shall remain here for some length of time I have proposed to get up a small school among the better educated of my men and instruct them in mathematics, tactics, etc.

Besides this I shall allow the men to plough land and lay out a farm. The land is very easily cultivated and I have no doubt we shall succeed in raising quite a crop of vegetables. If you have any radish seed (they thrive well I'm told) you

might enclose some in your next. I live quite economically at present (bacon being my chief subsistence) because I'm pretty nearly out of funds. You see the pay master, who owes me \$700 hasn't been around yet and Massachusetts which owes me five or six hundred more has not come to time. However I hope to weather the gale—and come out all right. I shall try not to starve. The health of my men is generally good; my own perfect. Corp. Gibson, for whom you enquire, most unfortunately while running up the flag this morning let go the rope and there is the pulley at the top 75 feet in the air. He feels rather unpleasantly about it.

Tonight we are burning off an island near us and the fires look like those of an encampment and remind me of our old marches. By the way, we came very near being a participant in a raid a night or two since. When I knew it was to take place I sent for permission to go. It came but a little too late. It was successful and brought in six prisoners. It was planned on report of a man who belonged to the rebel army who was home on a furlough and didn't want to go back again. He sent down word that about fifteen miles from here there was to be a party at which five other soldiers would be present besides himself. The Capt. commanding took 35 men and marched up there reaching the place at about ten o'clock as they were dancing in great style and surrounded the house, and knocked at the door. On which it was opened by a girl who cried out "Yanks." And sure enough they were. They were intelligent-looking men, much better than most I have seen, but were quite positive in their "secesh" views.

...I think I get all the letters you write and I have no doubt you get all I write, tho' I should think you would get tired receiving so many. I have met with my old classmate who is stationed on board the gunboat which is placed here for protection for the place and we endeavor to keep each other posted. Remember me to all my friends. I will send you a Richmond paper, though it is rather old, perhaps you have not seen one before....

Fort Gray, Plymouth, N. C., March 14, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I am sure that I cannot urge as an excuse for putting off writing that I am in want of time for at no time in my life have I had actually so little to do. Everything here seems to move on of its own weight. I do not even drill my men but turn them over to my non-Commissioned officers, as the manoeuvres are very simple and the Company drill mostly on the heavy guns.

I have received no doubt all the letters which have been sent me and read them with great avidity. Another of my Company is dead, and others are sick and the season of sickness has not yet commenced. You will understand the sickness is confined to those who have not been in the service before. We that are acclimated feel perfectly well. There is an immense swamp to the South of us extending 40 miles and another north "The Great Dismal Swamp." Of course they are filled with decayed vegetable matter which causes so much sickness, this however is not of a peculiarly fatal character. It is very uncomfortable to be sure. You remember Hugh Glancy? Well he used to have the "shakes." I wonder if he didn't shake himself to death at last? We have begun our farming and hope if we stay here to reap the fruits in abundance.

The prospects of an attack here are not very good. I don't think the Rebs could be hired to come here not certainly with their forces disposed as they are in Virginia. I sincerely hope they will for they will get most severely punished.

Tonight I have been trying to doctor a fellow who has the colic very badly. We were afraid he might die but he is better and I think he will get well again. . . .

Fort Gray, March 25, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I have a little time to write to you tonight. Your letters are very welcome. I believe the last time I wrote I told you there was no chance for a fight. I am now almost convinced that we shall have a muss before long. The ram is on the river and my fort will be the first

object of attack if she comes. God grant that she don't get any farther, and that I be enabled to do my full duty. I hope that she *will* come if they will only let me fight her alone but if they insist on bringing in a land force of artillerists and sharp-shooters with them to keep us away from our guns it will be very unpleasant. I shall have some of the "Secret Service" business so much thought of to tell about when the war is over.

I wish you could be here when some of the refugees and escaped prisoners come in. Four came in a few days since who had escaped from the cars while on the way to Georgia from Richmond. They were a whole fortnight in the woods and what is now agreed upon by all they testified that every negro they saw was faithful to them, that when they found they were Union soldiers they would feed them and conceal them, act as their guides and risk their lives for them. You should have seen those men,—their voices so full of happiness their eyes filled with tears as they looked at the old flag.

They had queer stories of their adventures to tell. One of them concealed a \$50 bill in a button, another a gold watch in his shirt-tail and they told these things in their rich Irish way that was perfectly irresistible.... I have had a good deal of company today (Sunday) and feel quite jovial.

I have been listening to a negro preacher tonight who thinks he is "gifted" and will give a full account of him in some future letter.

For the present, in the best of health and gayest of spirits, I am, I hope,

Your dutiful and loving son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Plymouth, N. C., March 29, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I am well and we are unattacked by the Rebs. They are in the vicinity and the town is excited about them, but more particularly in regard to that piece of offensive warfare known as the "Ram." We here, on "War Neck" do not care or think much about it. We have just been disturbed within fifteen minutes by the report of a

musket. It seems it was fired by one of my men at a *cow*. I arrested him at once and shall punish him severely tomorrow.

Yesterday afternoon a scout went out and came back before night with the news that the Rebs intended to surround our advanced Picket Post and take the men prisoners. The men were not sent out and the Rebs found they had been "sold."

Have you read the account of the hanging of thirty North Carolina soldiers by the Rebs? They were deserters from the Rebellion.

There are known to be eighty armed men in the woods near here making their way to the Union lines as recruits. You cannot imagine what the refugees and negroes suffer who are hunted like wolves by the soldiers of the Confederacy.

Cotton is brought in here in considerable quantities and various small articles are sold at the Picket Posts. We get eggs at 20 cents a dozen, milk 15 cents per quart, etc. Do you ever imagine me at my meals? You know I live all alone. I have for a dining table one about the size of a toilet table with no table cloth. My cup and saucer and plate are earthen. For breakfast I generally have cold ham, eggs, coffee and buckwheat cakes. Dinner: tea, ham, fish or beef and potatoes. Supper: coffee, flour cakes, etc. I eat just about one-tenth as much as I used to last summer but am just as well off. I read a good deal; have just read Butler in New Orleans by Parton which is very interesting, besides it furnishes a commentary on the conduct of the war on the breaking out of the Rebellion. I am now reading Kinglake's American War, besides quite a number of novels on hand. My life is easy and agreeable. Some things that were unpleasant have been rectified and I've nothing to complain of. But I had a thousand times rather be at home with you than here if I did not think it was my duty to be here.

I have not heard direct from you for a week or two.

Please write often. Goodbye.

Your aff. son,

Jos. E. Fiske.

Plymouth, April 3, 1864.

My dear Parents,—A letter informs me that you would like to hear from me. Though I have written quite regularly, I suppose some of my letters have been delayed or missent. I am quite well.

Just now my business is rather pressing as this month's end closes the quarter as well as the month. You can scarcely imagine what work I have in the shape of making returns. I have to make a return of all the ordinance I have on hand. This is made in triplicate and divided into ten *classes* with these copies of the invoices—issues—and expenditures.

Then there are monthly returns of clothing, camp and garrison equipage on which every article must be accounted for and the usual vouchers sent.—Also returns of deceased soldiers requiring eight papers for each dead soldier. Monthly returns of the Company also in triplicate.—Account of damaged arms. Besides this work I have some descriptive list or some voucher or some business letter or some consolatory letter to send almost every mail. I very frequently have letters from the friends of my men asking me if they are well and why they don't write and various other things. Some of them are very anxious letters and interesting, too. I imagine how the poor mothers must feel if they can find courage to write to so august a person as "Captain Fiske." I believe I still retain my popularity with my men, and I like them better the more I know them. I strive to get my men so trained (and I have succeeded pretty well) that they shall consider a rebuke from me a punishment and to accomplish this I am careful not to reprove a man when he does not deserve it. I really believe that my men fear me as much as the men in the commands of those men who punish very severely. I do punish some. I have given one man a barrel jacket for two days and hard labor for twenty. The first is made by cutting a hole in the bottom of a barrel and then turning it over the head of a man. This is quite uncomfortable as the man does not have the use of his hands. But my boys

all know that I prefer not to punish. I rather appeal to their honor or sense of shame—as for instance I reprimanded two of the boys this morning before all the men for having their guns dirty at inspection and I really believe they felt very unhappy about it.

I went up the river the other day to the place where some schooners are sunk and torpedoes are planted to overwhelm the Ram when she comes down, and a more gloomy place you can scarcely imagine. For miles there is nothing but almost impenetrable swamps full of the cypress covered with moss—not a single building to be seen, not a road nor a footpath—the silence is oppressive. Even the river seems to have no motion and drags its slow serpentine course along in the most lifeless and sluggish time.

The torpedoes are so arranged that the vessel shall strike against a frame work connected with a percussion arrangement which explodes a small keg containing 61 pounds of powder.

It might do a good deal of damage and might not. I would rather whip the ram myself but shall be quite content if she is destroyed before she reaches here. Lt. Greene, I understand, has gone home. His father came after him and I have no doubt he is now at Worcester. I like him better than any man in the detachment. Please remember me to all friends and let me hear from you as often as you find it agreeable to write.

Your aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Plymouth, N. C. April 13, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I have just received a letter from you and have only time before the mail closes to write that I am perfectly well and that there are no Rebs, no sickness, nothing disagreeable about this place.

Yours, fil. & respect.

Joseph E. Fiske.

LETTERS FROM PRISON.

Plymouth, N. C. April 21, 1864.

My dear Parents,—We are prisoners after a severe fight. I am entirely well and in the best of spirits.

Don't be anxious about me.

Your aff. son,

J. E. Fiske.

Tarboro, N. C. April 25, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I am *here*, very well, have written twice. We are going to Georgia probably. Write to me without sealing. Keep up your spirits about me. I'll come home again *safe*.

God bless you and protect you.

Your aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

We have been well treated thus far.

Macon, Geo., May 3, 1864.

My dear Father and Mother,—I am here with about a hundred officers. I am perfectly well and if I were assured that you were well and not too anxious about me I should be almost contented. We are informed that we are to be kept here permanently. I wish you would write me a few lines.

Goodbye. I'll write once in a while.

Your aff. son,

Jos. E. Fiske.

Macon, Geo., May 22, 1864.

My dear Father and Mother,—I want to write so as to make you sure of what is the real truth that I am perfectly well. I have not had even the slightest headache since my capture. I am in very good spirits, have enough to eat and feel worse about your anxiety for me than for anything else. I hope to be home soon. Don't trouble yourself about me. I believe our kind heavenly Father will take care of us.

Please write to me unsealed short letters, directing to me, Capt. Jos. E. Fiske, 2d Mass. H. A. & Prisoner of War, Macon, Geo., via Fortress Monroe, Va. Give my love to my friends, ask them to write to me.

Very affectionately,
Your son, J. E. Fiske, Capt. and Prisoner of War.

Macon, June 6, 1864.

My dear Father and Mother,—I am still well and comfortable. I have the right to write only a few lines. You cannot tell how much I wish to see you, and how much I fear you are too anxious about me. Don't worry about me. Give my love to my friends. Please write to me. I am quite anxious to hear from you.

Goodbye.

Your aff. son,

Jos. E. Fiske.

Capt. Co. H. 2d Reg. Mass. H. A.

Charleston, S. C., September 17, 1864.

My dear Parents,—I was overjoyed yesterday to receive a letter...saying that you were well. (The date was June 16). This is the first hint I have had of your existence or that you had heard from me since I was a prisoner. I am well, perfectly, and with your letter I am in the best of spirits. I have been well all the time with the exception of a little debility last month. . At Savannah we were treated very well indeed. We are not well settled here yet. Don't think anything about the shelling. I only hope I shall never be troubled by anything more formidable than Foster's "By Jinks." If we stay here all winter I shall want some clothing and I propose if you hear of no exchange a month from now you send me say two coarse cotton or linen shirts, an army blanket, a half dozen pair of socks, a pair of shoes, some handkerchiefs, some needles and pins, a few bottles of "extract of peppermint" and other simple medicines but no food, knife, fork, cup (tin), plate (tin), spoons,

and other little things, paper, envelopes, pen, &c. Let all the things be cheap, I don't care how coarse, but new. Direct to Capt. J. E. Fiske, 2d Mass. Arty, Prisoner of war, Charleston, S. C. Write to me and tell every body to.

Very aff. your son,

J. E. F.

Columbia, S. C., November 24, 1864.

My dear Father and Mother,—I have no doubt but that you are thinking of me today, perhaps fearing lest I am suffering, but I am not, only for fear of what *may* come and because I am here instead of in my own country. Our dinner today is chickens and apple dumplings, our breakfast mutton chops and eggs and coffee, *not* Government rations, I assure you. I want (if you will) that you send me a box occasionally with the articles I have before mentioned such as hams, cheese, dried beef and other things of that sort. Also send me some money as there is no knowing when I may be out. Send me \$50 if you please. I will send you soon an order upon which you can collect my pay if you like. I have some \$1900 due me from the Gov. I have had no letter from you yet. My weight is 138 pounds!

Columbia, S. C., December 1, 1864.

My dear Father and Mother,—I have an opportunity, I hope, of sending a letter through which I need not be limited by a page. To commence where I left off—The 17th of last April (Sunday) the pickets at my fort, the farthest outpost, were informed that a large Reb force was approaching. They soon appeared and opened on us with Artillery and at the fifth shot cut away our splendid flag and staff. The firing was very brisk till ten o'clock when it ceased till morning when an assault was made on the Fort which we repulsed with heavy loss to the Rebs and some to ourselves. A desultory firing was kept up all day and the next morning the Ram passed my fort paying no attention to the firing. She sunk the Southfield and drove away the other gunboats. The next morning the town was assaulted and captured and

the General sent up an order for the surrender of our Fort. We were the first to be attacked and the last to surrender! The next day we marched on toward Tarboro and continued our journey till at last we brought up at Macon, Geo., on the first of May. We were treated very well for a week or two till joined by the Libby prisoners from Richmond. We were then placed inside a stockade—and tho' we did not have the best of rations were on the whole comfortable. I wrote you very often from there.

On the 29th of July we were moved to Savannah to get out of the way of Sherman. There we were treated quite well, having plenty of beef, etc. On the 13th of September we were moved to Charleston into the jail yard where we were badly off for a week or more, though I was in perfect health which was not the case at Savannah. Then we went to the "Work House" till October 5th when we were driven away by the Yellow Fever—several of our officers having died of it. We came here into the woods without shelter and though now comfortable owe the fact to our own exertions and money which by the way is very scarce with me. I have written about boxes and money. If you have sent none, I'll tell you what I want. Clothing, etc: a pair of shoes, good ones, number 7. Nice (i. e. fine) woolen shirts, under and over, shirts, drawers, stockings, gloves, towels, needles and pins, jackknife, paper, pens, envelopes, etc.—essence of peppermint, court plaster, castor oil, Jamaica ginger, etc. Provisions—hams, dried beef, sardines, pickled salmon, condensed milk, unground coffee, green tea, pickles, cheese, Cayenne pepper, ginger, nutmegs, sugar loaf, confectionery and whatever else you choose which won't decay or break. Money—"Green Backs" bring here seven for one. Gold 25 or 30 for one. If you send me money in a box, put in one where the clothing is. Better send gold (say fifty dollars) *hidden securely* in some of my clothing. Be sure I'll find it. If you do not wish to risk it this way you can send me a draft on some Northern Bank (Mr. Torrey will tell you how it is done) and I can negotiate it here. Send me any quantity of Boston papers of any date since my capture and some novels—and a small

Bible. I have now nearly \$2000 due me from the Government and will give you an order upon which you can collect if you wish. I will send it now. If you do not collect let me know at once. During almost the whole time I have been in the Confederacy my health has been perfect, and considering all things I have been in good spirits. We have had a considerable amount of reading and the time actually passes away quickly. I retire at 7 or 8 and rise about 9 sleeping nearly all the time. And we buy meat at least once a day. This morning we had beef-steak and sweet potatoes for breakfast. I miss the living that I have been accustomed to, but I have endured this kind of life better than you anticipated. I think of you both hundreds of times daily.... Did you know you could write as much as you wish? I want all the news. I got a letter from you yesterday, the first I have received from you. 'Twas dated August 19th. In the fight I only lost four killed but since that I know of sixty-three of my company who have died in this Confederacy. Corporal Gibson is among them. Beckwith is not so reported but the friends of enlisted men need have but little hope of seeing them again. But very few officers die. Our treatment is much better than that of the Privates.

Fayetteville, March 12, 1865.

My dear Father and Mother,—Are you not glad to hear that I am *free* and well? I am both *perfectly* well and very happy indeed. I have been free about a month having escaped to Sherman's army from Columbia, S. C. We have been with General Blair.

I shall come home as soon as possible. I wish you to write to me as soon as you receive this directing to the Astor House, New York. Tell me whether you have drawn any of my pay and how much as it will make some difference to me.

Your most aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Capt. and *not* prisoner of war.

Fayetteville, N. C., March 13, 1865.

My dear Father and Mother,—I wrote to you yesterday telling you of my escape etc. I then expected to go home at once but I do not now think it will be possible for some time yet for me to do so. It may be two weeks or even more before I can leave this army. We are moving through this country without any opposition. I am on General Blair's staff and see everything there is to be seen.

Hoping very soon to see you, I am very affectionately,

Your son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

Ebbit House, Washington, D. C., April 2, 1865.

My dear Father and Mother,—I am here all right. Everything has progressed finely. I shall leave for Philadelphia on Tuesday and get home probably the latter part of the week.

Your aff. son,

Joseph E. Fiske.

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